

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4504

June 22, 2010

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Harry:

Thank you for your commitment to work to bring forward comprehensive energy legislation this summer. I believe such legislation should address the oil disaster in the Gulf of Mexico, move our nation to energy independence, cut greenhouse gas emissions, and create millions of good paying jobs over a period of years.

I know you share my view that it is critical as part of comprehensive energy legislation that we transform our energy system by investing heavily in energy efficiency and sustainable energy sources such as solar, wind, geothermal, biomass, and other clean and safe technologies. This is precisely what the American people want us to do. According to a Pew Research/National Journal poll taken earlier this month, 87 percent of the American people support requiring utilities to produce more energy from wind, solar, and other renewable resources, and 78 percent support tougher efficiency standards. These measures have far stronger support than providing incentives for nuclear power (50 percent).

As the only member in the Majority who sits on both the Energy and Natural Resources Committee and the Environment and Public Works Committee, I am concerned that the current legislative proposals we are examining are by no means strong enough in terms of energy efficiency and sustainable energy. In fact, the Kerry-Lieberman bill provides much greater funding for nuclear and coal (via carbon sequestration - an expensive and yet unproven technology), than for efficiency and sustainable energy. I think I speak for millions of Americans when I say this makes no sense at all. At the very least, any serious energy bill must include funding for energy efficiency and sustainable energy that is on par with the amounts provided for nuclear and coal. I should also say that given the BP disaster in the Gulf right now, the American people are rapidly coming to the conclusion that there should be a ban on opening new areas to offshore drilling. In fact, a majority of Americans now oppose increased offshore drilling according to a CNN poll released this week.

In my view, any legislation brought to the Senate floor this year must include the following provisions:

- **New Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Title:** We should, at a minimum, invest 10 percent of the allowance value from global warming legislation in energy efficiency and renewable energy for the first ten years to

transition our nation to a sustainable energy future. The Kerry-Lieberman legislation provides subsidies to the nuclear industry and coal industry worth more than \$100 billion at a minimum. A new Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Title must ensure parity for sustainable energy by investing 10 percent of allowances over the first ten years in efficiency and renewable energy. It must include investments similar to those made in S. 1733, the Kerry-Boxer bill as passed by the Environment and Public Works Committee, such as funding the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program, State Energy Program, a utility-scale sustainable energy program, and other promising avenues in sustainable energy. This Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Title could provide between \$8 billion and \$13 billion annually for sustainable energy, creating as many as 2 million new jobs based on data from the Political Economy Research Institute. I have included draft legislative text for this Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Title with this letter for your consideration.

- **No New Offshore Drilling** – With the disaster in the Gulf ongoing, we should not be considering expansion of offshore drilling. The billions of dollars in economic damages and the incalculable ecological damage caused by BP to the Gulf region require that we rethink our strategy. Expanded offshore drilling in the Gulf, Pacific, and Atlantic could produce 500,000 barrels of oil a day and save consumers 3 pennies per gallon of gas by 2030, according to the Energy Information Administration, but we could save nearly 4,000,000 barrels of oil a day and save the equivalent of \$1.43 a gallon by 2030 if we simply increased fuel economy to 55 miles per gallon. Comprehensive energy legislation should reinstate a moratorium on new offshore oil drilling, include strong provisions to reduce oil consumption by supporting the President's efforts to increase fuel economy, and also include significant investments in electric vehicles and infrastructure.
- **Set A Strong Renewable Electricity Standard** – The Energy Committee has reported the *American Clean Energy Leadership Act* (S. 1462), which includes a renewable energy standard of 15 percent by 2021. However due to a number of other provisions in the bill, including allowing energy efficiency to count toward this requirement, the real amount of renewable energy it requires is somewhere between only 7.4 and 10.7 percent. If we are serious about transforming our energy system, we must recognize that a requirement of 15 percent by 2021, where energy efficiency counts toward the total, is far too weak and has in fact already been surpassed by a number of states across the country. The Energy Information Administration has projected that under a business as usual scenario we may achieve 17 percent renewable energy by 2020, including 10 percent from non-hydropower renewable energy like solar, wind, biomass, and geothermal. We should increase the renewable electricity standard to 25 percent by 2025, as President Obama has called for. This provision alone could create hundreds of thousands of new jobs according to the Union of Concerned Scientists, while helping to meet our greenhouse gas reduction goals.

I look forward to working with you to strengthen comprehensive energy legislation, and thank you for your leadership in bringing such legislation to the floor of the Senate this summer.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bernard Sanders", with a stylized, cursive script.

BERNARD SANDERS

United States Senator

Cc: The Honorable Jeff Bingaman
The Honorable Maria Cantwell
The Honorable John Kerry
The Honorable Barbara Boxer